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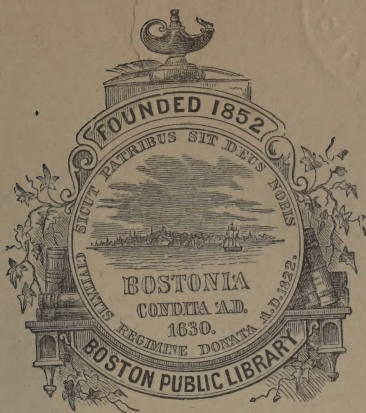
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THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE PRISON.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE INSTITUTION SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT—SOME OF THE NOTEWORTHY EVENTS—THE CONCORD SITE—THE QUESTION OF RETURNING TO CHARLESTOWN.

The proposition to remove the prison to the old site at Charlestown has naturally drawn public attention to the chief correctional institution of Massachusetts. This is sufficient excuse for what follows relative to the expediency of vacating the new and going back to the old, prefaced by a rapid sketch of the history of the prison, the facts in which have been gathered from conversations with officials and from printed reports.

The prison site in Charlestown, known in 1805 as "Lynde's Point," was selected for its healthfulness and the superior facilities it afforded for the transportation of stone for convict labor. Only one bridge barred the way to the ocean—Prison Point Bridge not having been built until 1809—and all carriage communication with Cambridge was by the way of Charlestown Neck. That portion of the prison known as the west wing—including the hospital, the upper and lower arch—was erected in 1804-5, at an expense of \$175,000, under the supervision of Edward H. Robbins, Charles Bulfinch and Jonathan Hunnewell, commissioners. The centre of the building was five stories high and was occupied by the keeper and underkeeper, with their families. The wings were four stories in height, and contained ninety cells, nine by eight feet, with two openings in each, two feet in height by four inches wide, for the admission of light and air. The doors were made of solid wrought-iron, weighing about six hundred pounds. The entire block was two hundred feet in length by forty in width. It was first occupied Dec. 12, 1805, by the arrival from Dedham of Richard Hart of Saybrook, Conn., and John Green of Dedham, sentenced to two years' imprisonment for theft. Thirty-two convicts were received during the month from Castle Island (Fort Independence), where State prisoners had been confined at hard labor since 1785.

The first death in the prison was that of John Chubbuck, on Jan. 20, 1806. The first pardoned was Eli Page, sentenced at Worcester, Sept. 24, 1796, to eighteen years for theft; pardoned June 19, 1806. On Jan. 24, 1806, one Isaac More, Jr., made the first escape from this prison. In 1807 the first contract to let the labor of convicts was made with William Little, who hired twenty convicts to work at harness-making "at forty dollars a week for the first six months, and fifty dollars a week after that period." The first female prisoner was Elizabeth Crane. Her record is thus given: "Age, thirty; height, five feet one inch; eyes, hair and

complexion dark; born in Philadelphia, sentenced at Boston, Nov. 26, 1805, to five years for theft." She remained at Castle Island until Jan. 5, 1807, when she moved to Charlestown. March 3, 1823, Catherine Murphy, aged eighteen, blue eyes, brown light complexion, born in Halifax, N. S., sentenced at Boston for life, for "violently stealing from William Church." Pardoned Oct. 1, 1825. She was the last female victim in this prison. May 24, 1823, there was convicted at Boston, of the crime of robbing Abigail Hill, nineteen years of age, born in Boston; Rhoda Heath, aged nineteen, born in Portsmouth, N. H., and Hannah Atwood, aged twenty-four, born in Tuftonborough, H., and sentenced to the State prison for life. The last females sent to this institution. Heath was pardoned Feb. 7, 1824, served only eight months and two weeks. She was pardoned June 11, 1825, and Hannah Atwood remained until Sept. 6, 1825, when she was pardoned. Whole number of female convicts ever confined in this prison is seventy. The whole number of commitments to Charlestown and Concord, up to date, is nearly 10,000, many of these of course being recidivists. The number in prison at last report was 670.

Until 1830, granite-laden vessels from Quincy, drawing ten feet of water, unloaded their cargoes on the prison wharf, close under the west wall, while boats from the Middlesex Canal, with stone from Chelmsford and wood and produce from the Middlesex farms, passed under a raised portcullis in the prison walls, and discharged their freight on the spot afterwards occupied by the prison flower bed. In the northwest angle of the yard was a basin, thirty feet square by six feet deep, which filled and emptied at every rise and ebb of the tide, and made a convenient bathing place for the convicts in summer.

The officers of the prison in 1806 were as follows: Board of visitors, Hon. Artemas Ward, Josiah Bartlett, Rev. Jedediah Moore, D. D., Andrew Craigie, Joseph Hurd; chaplain, Rev. Jedediah Morse, D. D.; physician, Hon. Josiah Bartlett; superintendent, David Jackson; clerk, Captain Thomas Oliver; warden, John Pelham; underkeeper, William Going; assistants, Nathaniel Trask, David Barker, Jonathan Call, Jonathan Denison; watchmen, Zebina Eastman, Frederick Allen, Elias Crafts, John Perry.

The bill of fare, as fixed by the board of visitors in 1806, consisted as follows: "Breakfast and supper—three gills of Indian meal, made into hasty pudding, and a gill of molasses, or occasionally coffee, with half a pound of bread. Dinner—Three-quarters of a pound of coarse meat, or offal, made into soup properly seasoned, with half a pound of bread of the cheapest materials, and half a pint of potatoes, or occasionally a quart of salt pork, with half a pint of butter or pease boiled, or soup of fresh fish, plenty and cheap."

says Warden Chamberlain, "it is to the allurements held forth in the sumptuous bill of fare, or it being a violent establishment," as the board of visitors call it, or some unknown cause, seems to have been an alarming increase of crime in the State, as next year, forty-two were received at the prison," and right here, to show the improvement in prison fare since the establishment of this institution, contrast the following dietary of 1881 with that given above:

Sunday—Breakfast, rice, white bread and coffee; dinner, meat hash, white bread and coffee.

Monday—Breakfast, fish hash, white bread and coffee; dinner, corned beef and vegetables and brown bread; supper, white bread and coffee.

Tuesday—Breakfast, meat hash, white bread and coffee; dinner, baked or stewed beans and brown bread; supper, white bread and coffee.

Wednesday—Breakfast, potatoes and corned beef, white bread and coffee, or salt mackerel and oatmeal; dinner, beef soup and white bread; supper, white bread and coffee.

Thursday—Breakfast, meat hash, white bread and coffee; dinner, pea soup and white bread; supper, white bread and coffee.

Friday—Breakfast, fish hash, white bread and coffee; dinner, baked beans and brown bread; supper, white bread and coffee.

Saturday—Breakfast, meat hash, white bread and coffee; dinner, beef soup and white bread; supper, white bread and coffee.

These rations are varied somewhat by the warden, who, from time to time, at his discretion, introduces articles not named above.

The following letter of the chaplain, in 1808, to the board of visitors, is worthy of notice for its unique conscientiousness:

Gentlemen—As a change of sentiment has taken place with me on the subject of infant baptism, and not knowing but this may form some objection to the continuance of my services at the State prison, I think it my duty to intimate to you my desire to discontinue them. If desired, I have no objection to supply for a Sabbath or two, until you may conveniently provide yourselves with some other person.

WALTER BALFOUR.

In 1811 a new act was passed by the General Court "providing for the government and regulation of the State prison." The board of visitors and the office of superintendent were abolished, and a board of directors and the office of warden created. In 1812, in view of a contemplated visit of his excellency Governor Elbridge Gerry, the board of directors issued the following manifesto:

Ordered, That during the visitation no strangers be allowed within the walls; that the keeper receive the visitors at the outer gate, and conduct them to the directors' room, where they shall be received by the warden, and introduced to the board; that the warden, directors, chaplain and physician, preceded by the keeper, attend to the visitors through the several apartments of the prison, to answer and explain to them such questions and inquiries as they may

make upon the subject of the management of the prison, and the conduct of the visitors.

In 1829, in consequence of the disagreements between the warden and the board of directors, as to their respective duties and authority, the Legislature abolished that board and established a board of inspectors.

In 1829 an addition was made to the prison by the building of the north wing, containing 304 cells, seven feet in length by three and a half in width. In 1850-51, the south wing was erected, containing 150 cells on a much-improved plan; and the prison at Charlestown, substantially as it stood prior to the removal to Concord, was completed, with 642 cells proper; ten dark cells for punishment; twelve rooms in the "upper arch," for the incorrigible; four dungeons in the "lower arch," for violent cases, and sixteen beds in the hospital, for the sick.

On the 22d of June, 1809, Isaac Jackson, a negro, serving a six-years' sentence for larceny, was shot and mortally wounded by the guard, in attempting to scale the wall to escape.

On the 8th of November, 1821, a negro convict, known as "Billy Williams," was murdered in the yard by Samuel Green and other convicts unknown, on suspicion of his having divulged to the authorities a formidable plot to escape. Green was hanged on Boston Neck. Another convict engaged in the murder, Howard Trask by name, while confined in the old Leverett-street jail, killed two prisoners, his roommates. The authorities decided that he must be insane, and he was kept in jail.

June 15, 1843, convict Abner Rogers, Jr., killed Charles Lincoln, Jr., the prison warden, in one of the shops, by stabbing him in the neck with a shoe knife. Rogers was acquitted of the charge of murder on the ground of insanity, and sent to the prison hospital at Worcester, where, a few months later, he broke his neck in an attempt to escape.

July 19, 1853, James Wilson, a Botany Bay convict, whose sentence of four years in this prison expired on the morning of the tragedy, stepped from the ranks while marching to the shop, stabbed and killed William Adams, a fellow convict. Wilson was condemned to death, but had his sentence commuted to solitary imprisonment for life. He died May 19, 1875, having served, on his life sentence, nineteen years and five weeks.

On Sunday, Dec. 15, 1856, Deputy Warden Galen C. Walker was assassinated in the chapel by convict James Magee, who stabbed his victim in the neck with a shoe knife. Magee was hanged.

On the 29th of the same month, Solon H. Tenney was stabbed in the neck with a shoe knife by convict Charles D. Decatur, who died in jail during the following year.

Several unsuccessful attempts have since been made to kill officers; two of the would-be assassins have received twenty years' additional sentence, and two others ten years each.

In his report to the inspectors in 1872, Warden Chamberlain says, "A close and thorough inspection of the prison buildings, workshops and their appurtenances, made at the time of my appointment, demonstrates the necessity for immediate and extensive repairs, or the building of a new prison. *** The insalubrity of the present site of the prison affords one of the strongest arguments in favor of its removal to a more healthy situation."

In February, 1875, the State Board of Health, reporting on the sanitary condition of the prison, conclude as follows:

To recapitulate, we would respectfully represent that there are now four powerful influences tending to cause bad health among the prisoners: 1, the present overcrowding of the convicts; 2, the bad ventilation of the various apartments; 3, the very offensive condition of the prison sewage, which is now allowed to escape openly on the flats immediately adjacent to the walls; 4, the flats themselves, open as they are to sewage from adjoining sewers. It is somewhat hazardous to make a prediction; but we think that unless some remedy is adopted for the present evils, we shall have in the future only an increase of our present mortality, and we shall be fortunate if no severe epidemic occurs.

HENRY I. BOWDITCH.
RICHARD FROTHINGHAM.
CHARLES F. FOLSOM.

The question of building a new State prison was brought before the Legislature in 1872, when a resolve was passed for the board of inspectors to examine into the expediency of such a movement and make a detailed report on the whole subject to the next Legislature. The inspectors in their report sustained the warden's recommendation, and the Legislature of 1873 passed an act authorizing the building of a new prison. After many delays, caused by considerable opposition in the House during the sessions of 1874, 1875 and 1876, the erection of the buildings at Concord commenced in 1875, and progressed quite rapidly under the supervision of Hon. Thomas Wakefield, Jonas Fitch and S. A. Denio.

The removal to the new prison at Concord was begun on the 16th of May, 1878, and completed on the 22d of the same month. The site embraces an area of 120 acres (twenty acres enclosed), and the buildings are of brick with granite trimmings. The number of cells is 800 (670 in the wings), and the sanitary arrangements were intended to be perfect. The original act provided that the prison should be built within the appropriation of \$1,000,000. The report of expenses, made by the commissioners, Dec. 1, 1878, showed that an unexpended balance of \$25,844.59 remained on hand. Expenses for repairs and changes since that date have raised the total expenditure to a sum probably not far from \$1,200,000. The principal change was the strengthening of seventy-two rooms by lining their outward walls with iron plating, an expedient considered advisable after the escape of John Whelton

from one of the "trough rooms" into the prison yard.

In less than two months after the removal to Concord, a fire broke out on the morning of July 19, which substantially destroyed about three-fourth of the workshops. This inflicted on the State a direct loss of about \$25,000 by the destruction of its property, and also involved a loss of income by throwing out of employment about four hundred men, whose earnings would amount to \$160 per diem. The work of rebuilding was begun Aug. 1, and the shops were again ready for occupancy early in October following. The fire was undoubtedly of incendiary origin. It was thought at the time that some outside interested party furnished a convict with a torpedo, which caused the explosion with which the fire began.

Attempts to escape, successful and unsuccessful, have been frequent in both the old and new prisons, and need not be mentioned here. There is one case, however, which will bear especial mention. On the 20th of August, 1878, convict William Martin, armed with a shoe knife, threatened the life of officer J. W. Owens while in the discharge of his duty in trying to secure him after escaping from a solitary cell. Officer Owens three times ordered Martin to drop his knife, which he, with threats, refused to do, and advanced towards the officer. Owens warned the prisoner of the consequence, and afterwards fired his pistol, inflicting a mortal wound, from which Martin died two days afterwards. He was the first convict killed in the Massachusetts State Prison by an officer in defence of his own life and enforcing discipline.

Following is a complete list of the wardens since the occupancy of the Charlestown Prison in 1806, with the dates of appointment and retirement of each: Daniel Jackson, 1806, 1810; Robert Gardner, 1810, 1812; Gamaliel Bradford, 1812, 1824; Thomas Harris, 1824, 1828; William Austin, 1828, 1832; Charles Lincoln, Jr., 1832, 1843 (murdered); Frederick Robinson, 1843, 1849; H. K. Frothingham, 1849, 1852; Stephen Whitmore, Jr., 1852, 1854; Jefferson Bancroft, 1854, 1856; David S. Jones, 1855, 1856; Solon H. Tennes, 1856, 1856 (murdered); Jacob S. Porter, 1857, 1858; Gideon Haynes, 1858, 1871; S. E. Chamberlain, 1871, 1881; David M. Earle, 1881 (the present incumbent).

It was claimed that the removal to Concord would insure a better sanitary result, that the cost of maintenance would be very much less, and that better terms could be made with contractors for the men's labor. For precisely similar reasons a removal back to Charlestown is now urged. Let us take up the sanitary and financial points separately.

First, the sanitary question. This is best shown in the comparative death rate of the two sites. The last three years at Charlestown showed a death rate of 1 to 49, and the first three years at Concord an average of

31. More specifically: The Charlestown rate in 1875 was 1 to 57; in 1876, 1 to 38; in 1877, 1 to 57. The Concord rate was—1875, 1 to 28; 1880, 1 to 31; 1881, 1 to 36. As 1878 was spent partly at the old prison, that year is not included in this statement. In the last three years at Charlestown there were 24 deaths from consumption and typhoid fever; in the first three years at Concord there were 4 deaths from the same causes.

The apparent causes for this bad state of things at Concord are to be found in imperfect ventilation, the lack of sewerage and the absence of a sufficient supply of pure water. It is worthy of note that the evils now complained of were accurately predicted by Governor Talbot in his communication to the Prison Commissioners, Nov. 18, 1874, giving reasons for not approving the plans for the new prison. Of the ventilation he says, "The system proposed in the plans is an experiment which has not been thoroughly and satisfactorily tested, in my judgment, and which, I am led to believe by those familiar with the subject of ventilation, will prove a failure." Speaking of the water-closets in the cells, to which he objects "most strenuously," the governor says, "As a consequence of this plan, the whole system of the drainage of the prison is necessarily made both complicated and expensive. From such information as I have been able to obtain, I am satisfied that they will be liable to need constant repairs, and that, unless greater care is exercised in their management than they would be likely to receive from convicts, they will prove extremely offensive to the cells. The pipes, however, are liable to get filled up, not only from ordinary uses to which they are put, but from attempts to dispose of articles and materials through them such as they are never intended to receive. And when this should happen, from any cause, the drain pipe would be so inaccessible, when enclosed, as they are intended to be, in a solid wall, that great trouble would be experienced, and much expense incurred, in putting them again in working order." Farther on in the report are these words: "From inquiries and investigations made of the system of drainage presented by the plans and specifications, we learn that no provision is made for underdraining the ground or gravel on which are to be the floors of the basement story. The necessity for this is deemed by scientists of great importance for sanitary purposes. It appears, from the specifications, that the main soil-pipes are to extend from the brick floors up to one foot above the mid-partition wall." They would thus ventilate into the foul-air chamber over the cells, communicating on the same level with, and directly alongside of, the ventilating flues rising up from each cell. These should not be put into any such common chamber, but should extend up through the roof, so as to prevent the possibility of these foul gases being carried into the cells by downward

drafts in the ventilating flues. These ventilating flues will not always have an upward draft, though such may be the intention."

Next the cost of maintenance. In his report, Oct. 1, 1878, Warden Chamberlain says, "We will reduce the expenses here [Concord] from \$15,000 to \$20,000 per year from what they were in Charlestown." Per contra, Governor Talbot predicts that the prison will be "unnecessarily expensive to build, and far more expensive to maintain than is desirable. A largely increased force of officers and employees will be needed, not only to guard the walls, but to preserve order and maintain that discipline among the prisoners which is so essentially necessary for their safe-keeping."

It will be seen, therefore, that the evil at Charlestown arising from "the very offensive condition of the prison sewage," which was there "allowed to escape openly on the floors immediately adjacent to the walls," is intensified at Concord, where the sewage is spread upon the outlying grounds. To abate this nuisance a supply of water is necessary. This can be secured either from the town or from Lake Nagog, for the interest on \$70,000. With a water supply secured, it is claimed that the sewage can be properly taken in care of for all time for from \$3000 to \$12,000. It now costs \$2500 per annum for coal used in pumping the water into the prison tanks. This is upon the authority of the Prison Commissioners, who do not, however, express any opinion upon the question of removal. They profess to be indifferent in the matter, but say that if the prison is to remain at Concord, the sewage must be provided for. They say, also, that the building of a new block of solitary cells outside the main prison building is imperatively demanded. The solitary cells, thirty-five in number, are now situated beneath the guardroom and are ventilated through the prison. When a prisoner is confined in one of these cells, he has lost in his power to make sufficient noise to keep the whole prison population, officers and convicts, awake all night, and he generally exercises his power. The result is that the men are unfitted for work next day and many of them are excused, thus causing a direct loss of income to the State. These cells were located where they now are against the protest of General Chamberlain. To rebuild them, as proposed, would cost about \$35,000. The Commissioners say a block of ten or twelve should be erected at once, which could be done for some \$12,000 or \$15,000.

With regard to the question of water and sewerage, a member of the Executive Council says that the prison is abundantly supplied with water from the Assabet River and from driven wells. He puts little credence in the complaints of the deleterious effects of sewage spread upon the fields outside the prison walls, thinking the evils are mostly imaginary. He does not believe that the prison wells are contaminat-

ed by it, and says if a supply of water necessary to carry the sewage away were secured, it could not be availed of, as permission to drain into the Assabet has been refused.

Recapitulations of the financial statements for 1877 (the last full year at Charlestown) and 1881 are here given:

1877—CHARLESTOWN.

Dr.

Stock on hand.....	\$15,125.52
Paid for various departments.....	140,817.51
	<u>\$155,943.03</u>

Cr.

Stock on hand to new account.....	\$13,189.48
Earnings of convicts' labor.....	80,648.33
From old labor.....	570.28
Received from other sources.....	19,627.01
	<u>\$114,035.10</u>
Deficit against prison.....	41,907.93
	<u>\$155,943.03</u>

1881—CONCORD.

Dr.

Stock on hand.....	\$13,418.92
Paid for departments.....	132,707.24
	<u>\$146,126.16</u>

Cr.

Stock on hand to new account.....	\$13,952.46
Earnings for labor.....	85,546.95
Received from other sources.....	18,015.87
	<u>\$117,515.28</u>
Deficit.....	28,610.88
	<u>\$146,126.16</u>

There is an apparent gain here in favor of Concord, but it must be remembered that the pay of convicts has materially increased, consequent upon the higher price of labor outside. With about the same number of prisoners, the income from labor has increased but about \$5000, notwithstanding that, with the exception of about two hundred men, who receive fifty cents per diem under a five-years' contract made in 1873, the men are of twenty cents a man for six hundred men now paid sixty cents a day, against forty cents at Charlestown in 1877. The difference for a year of three hundred days would amount to \$36,000,000, or \$23,000,000 more than the difference in the deficits above given, and which there appears to be a favorable showing for Charlestown. And this is not all. Were the prison at Charlestown now, it is generally admitted that from fifteen to twenty cents more than is now received could be obtained from each man's daily labor.

What is the financial status of the two properties? The Concord site, consisting of 120 acres, cost \$100 an acre, the assessed valuation of which was \$10 an acre. This is believed to have been an excessive valuation, and probably could not be realized on a forced sale. The whole property has cost about \$1,200,000. It could be utilized for manufacturing purposes, but its situation is not convenient, and the cost of the extensive alteration which would be necessary would

tained, \$100,000 would doubtless have to be expended upon it. The Charlestown prison is now let for \$10,000. It was offered for sale two years ago, when \$500,000 would have been gladly accepted. Were the buildings removed, it would readily bring that figure today. The flats, the cause of the old complaints, have been filled, and the nuisance has been removed; but to raise the west wing and build fifty additional cells would entail an expenditure of \$100,000.

If the prison had never been built at Concord, there could be but one opinion as to the advantages of the respective sites; but as the State has the property on its hands, property that cannot be disposed of except at a ruinous sacrifice, and as the Charlestown site must sooner or later find a purchaser at a fair price, it would seem the part of wisdom to put the Concord prison into proper sanitary condition and utilize it. This seems to be the prevalent opinion at the State House, where it is not generally believed that the proposition to remove will prevail before the Legislature.



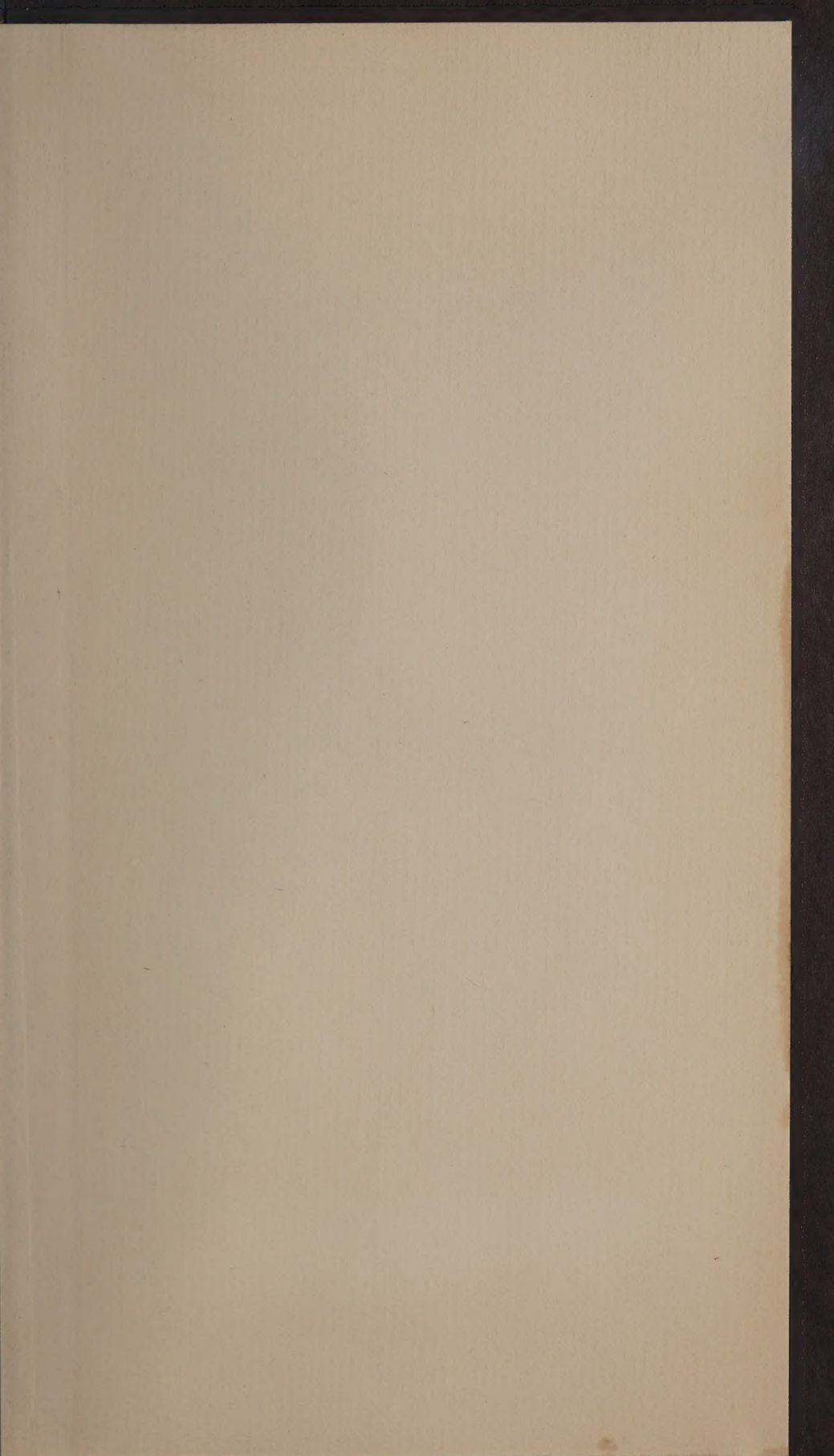
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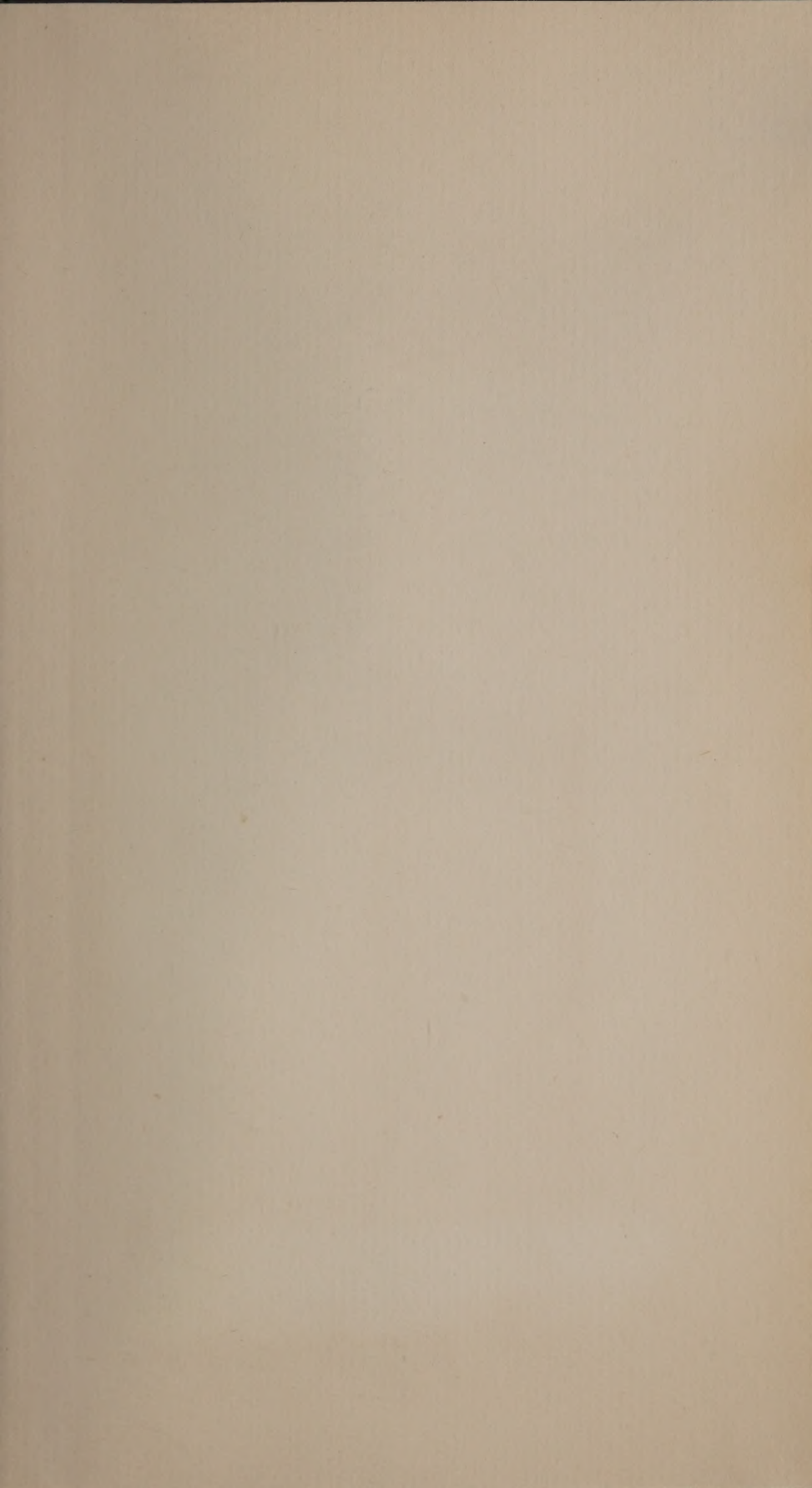
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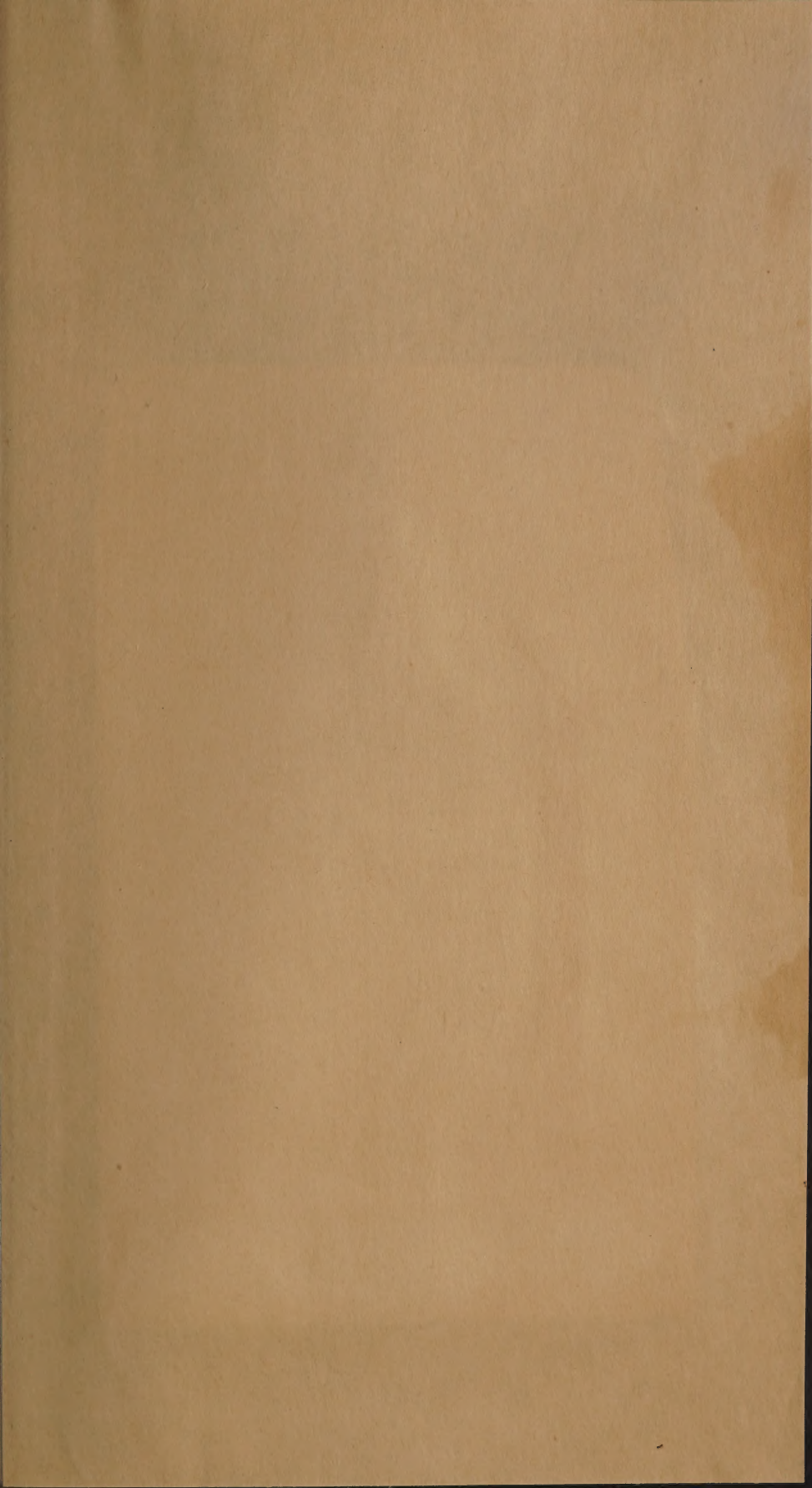
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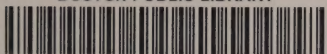
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